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4 November 1963

MEMORANDUM OF DEBRIEFING

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1. Today [redacted] chief of EE Division and [redacted] the Division's Polish analyst met with U.S. Ambassador Cabot, who was in Washington from Warsaw for consultations.

2. Ambassador Cabot was asked to comment on church-state relations in Poland, the popular mood, and on party political infighting.

3. He said that he felt that the campaign against the Roman Catholic Church in Poland was and would be continuous, because Gomulka probably believes in "snipping a root" whenever possible in hopes that the "tree will eventually fall." He ascribed as the major reason Gomulka's abhorrence of another power center in the country other than the Communist Party. Finally, he said, Cardinal Wyszynski's sermons and other public remarks have a great deal of weight in a country which is 90 percent Catholic, and his recent remarks have not been kind. For instance, he cited one sermon in which the Cardinal accused party officials of "living high on the hog." It caused an enormous reaction both outside and within the regime.

4. Mr. Cabot also said that the popular mood in Poland, although characterized by a great deal of dissatisfaction and grumbling was "not near the flash point." As reasons he ascribed the government's disgraceful performance during the difficult winter of 1962-1963, when regime plans went completely awry.

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Furthermore, he said, food is not too plentiful, prices have been rising, wages have not been rising, and there are all the problems attendant on the perennial shortage of foreign exchange. Prospects for this winter, he added, were somewhat better, as the government seemed to be making some preparations.

5. As to political jockeying within the party, the Ambassador asserted that Gomulka remains master of the situation, and has faced no serious challenge. Things are not going well in general, however, and outstanding problems remain unsolved. He emphasized that the problem of Germany is foremost in Gomulka's mind, and in this context, that Gomulka has again undertaken to mediate the Sino-Soviet dispute, taking pains to "keep the lid on" and to prevent overly emotional reactions. As a good Communist, Gomulka has a practical fear that the Chinese Communists will carry the dispute outside circumscribed limits which would be damaging to the bloc, and would put Khrushchev on the defensive on two fronts. He is wary about the growing power of Germany and feels that in a two-front situation that Poland's interests might well be sacrificed in a new Rappallo.

25X1A 6. When asked whether he detected signs of deteriorating relations between Poland and the United States, he said no, and added that those incidents cited by [REDACTED] all had reasonable explanations of their own. He said, for instance, that he agreed with the Polish assessment that a proposal in October for a visit to Poland by Vice President Johnson would be dangerous, both from an internal point of view, as well as from the point of view of exposing Poland to criticism from the other bloc nations.

7. There has been a retrogression in Poland, he said, but it is gradual, and he pointed out that we frequently take note of movements backwards while we fail to notice the "slow ooze forward." As an example, he said that his Embassy staff had told him that "we are getting away with more" in the cultural area now than ever before.

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